

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES
OPERATIONAL POLICY LETTER #23**

Date Issued: Revised – January 15, 2002 (Revision of December 14, 1994)

Operational Policy Letter #: OPL 2002.023

To: Current M+C Organizations

Subject: Manual Manipulation of the Spine to Correct Subluxation – Medicare Coverage

Effective Date: January 15, 2002

Implementation Date: January 15, 2002

Operational Policy Question:

Which practitioners are authorized by law to perform manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation as a Medicare-covered service?

Answer:

Section 1861 (r) of the Social Security Act provides the definition of a physician for Medicare coverage purposes, which includes a chiropractor for treatment of manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation. (As a standard Medicare Part B benefit, manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation must be made available to enrollees in all Medicare + Choice plans). The statute specifically references manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation as a physician service. Thus, Medicare+Choice organizations must use physicians, which include chiropractors, to perform this service. They may not use non-physician physical therapists for manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation. Medicare+Choice organizations may continue to use physical therapists to treat enrollees for conditions not requiring physician services as defined in section 1861 (r) of the Social Security Act.

Contact: CMS Regional Office Managed Care Staff

This OPL was prepared by the Center for Beneficiary Choices.